



Dear civil society colleagues,

The Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC) sincerely appreciates your letter of 8th December, 2008, informing the RJC of your thoughts on how the RJC might advance work on the setting of mining standards and third-party assurance. The RJC has seriously considered and discussed at length (hence the delayed response) your thoughts and recommendations and offers the following response to your letter.

The RJC System:

At the outset, it must be understood that the RJC System is designed to provide independent third party certification for the full life cycle of Diamond and Gold jewellery (the RJC System). The RJC System is clearly a product stewardship system; it is not focussed on the mining phase alone. As such, the RJC System markedly contrasts with IRMA's agenda, which has multi-commodity mining as its sole focus.

Third Party Certification:

Your letter questions whether the RJC System warrants the description of being independent, third party certification because you are of the view that the RJC's standards development process was not multi-stakeholder in nature.

The RJC is firmly of the view that the RJC System is a third party certification system.

Michael Conroy in "*Branded*" at page 14 states: "The most important difference rests in **who verifies** that a company has met the standards to which it has committed itself." (Emphasis added.) Accordingly, the RJC system calls for members to attain third party verification of performance against the standards.

Third party certification refers to who does the assessments, with the existence of a standard as a given, however developed.

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RJC will only provide a certificate on the basis of a recommendation from an accredited third party (i.e. independent of both RJC and the member) auditor.

The RJC System's Mining Supplement:

The RJC has been very clear that it is working to a tight timetable for release of the RJC System and that the RJC intends to include mining standards as part of the RJC system on its release.

In the absence of the IRMA process agreeing a set of mining standards within the timeframe required by the RJC, the RJC has sought to develop appropriate mining standards for incorporation into the RJC System. In doing so, the RJC has been transparent in the sourcing of its standards. Most of the standards in the RJC's current draft documents have been drawn from highly regarded international sources. Moreover, many of these standards were drafted by multi-stakeholder processes.

The RJC has been proactive in seeking stakeholder input to its standards. To date the RJC has received over thirty high quality contributions from stakeholders around the world. As you state in your letter, many of these valuable contributions have come from your letter's signatory organisations and/or individuals.

Further, the RJC has been transparent in showing how the RJC has handled these contributions from stakeholders in the further development of the RJC's mining standards.

RJC Consultative Panel:

Stemming from the very useful discussions with civil society participants in the meetings the RJC conducted in Denver in October and London in December, the RJC has decided to establish a small Consultative Panel of stakeholders – working through emails and teleconferencing – as the most time- and cost-effective means to help the RJC move forward and finalise its Mining Supplement.

The RJC is keen to know if any of signatories to your letter would be interested in participating in the RJC's Consultative Panel.

Conclusion:

Given the current global financial crisis, the RJC, like every other business and civil society organisation in the world, is looking to reduce costs and is focussing on institution-critical activities. As a result, whilst RJC will continue to support, in principle, an IRMA concept, the RJC does not have the resources to participate actively. As a contribution to the IRMA process, we invite IRMA to freely use (with appropriate acknowledgement) the materials produced so far by RJC - which can be found on our website at www.responsiblejewellery.com.

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The RJC thanks you for your contributions to these important issues and looks forward to further constructive engagement with your organisations.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Runci', written in a cursive style.

Matt Runci
Chairman,
Responsible Jewellery Council
6th February, 2009

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